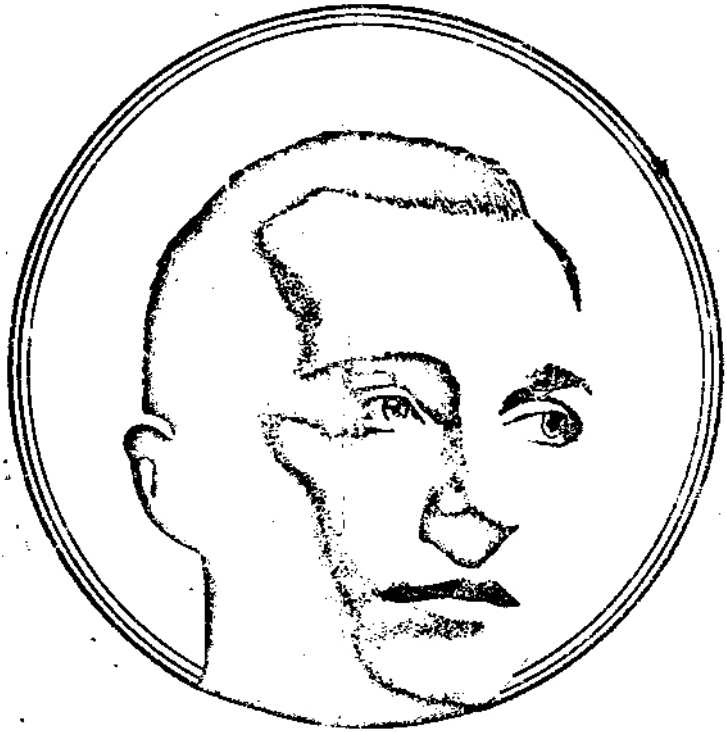

the Victorian Bing Crosby Society

NEWSLETTER

APRIL 24th. 1978

Hello again,
Well here we are with our second newsletter for 1978, the year that looks like being the all time record Crosby release year. Seems as if the record companies are deliberately trying to get as much material out while the boom lasts. In many ways, it's really very sad, but at least from a collector's point of view, and especially for the newer collector, it's a wonderful opportunity to pick up Bing material that hasn't been available for many years, and very likely, will never be again. Later in this issue, I'll give you a rundown on interesting issues, both here and abroad.
But first, I hope that you like our new cover, and in fact, new format. At this stage, we are still experimenting but I think that most people find this horizontal format easier to read. If you have any comments or suggestions, please let me know.

A very special member

I'm sure that you will be delighted to hear that Kathryn Crosby has very graciously consented to accept the position of honorary number one life membership in our Society. Kathryn's letter of acceptance is reproduced later in this newsletter. We wish her and her young family all the happiness and success they deserve in the future.

A report on functions just passed.

Sunday, March 12th - Barbecue. Despite the threatening clouds, close to 50 members attended our last barbecue which turned out be an enjoyable afternoon. In fact, the only snags in the afternoon's proceedings were those provided by Frank "butcher" Wood, and as usual, they went down very well. (Sorry about that.) Thanks for your help, Frank, and thanks also to Mrs Wood for all her help, and especially thanks to Jim "spruiker" McManus who successfully conducted the lucky wheel and supplied the records to be given away as prizes. By the way, I'm sure that you will join me in conveying our very best wishes to Jim who has just handed over the reins of his shop, The Bentleigh Sewing and Record Centre, to Ken Henderson, and departed these shores for the first of two well-deserved overseas trips. Ken, of course, is well-known to many of us, and he has promised to continue Jim's policy of giving members of our society 10% discount on all records purchased from the shop.

Jim McManus also deserves thanks for his successful handling of the auction of rare and unusual records at the barbecue. Most interesting item sold on the day was the extremely rare LP "Bing and Connee" which was the centre of some extremely heated bidding between two well-known club members.

Sunday April 9th - Film Afternoon - The Collingwood Centre was once again the venue for this, the first of our screenings for 1978. And what a great afternoon it was. Over 80 members turned up to see Bing's 1936 movie "Pennies from Heaven" - a most interesting film , and one that hadn't been seen in Australia for many many years. It was interesting because, a) it was made by Columbia instead of Bing's usual production company Paramount (they didn't make that mistake too often) and because it was one of the early films in which we saw the transition of 'Bing Crosby - radio crooner' to 'Bing Crosby - actor'. One of the highlights of the movie was Bing's first appearance with the great Louis Armstrong. I believe that Bing played a great part in the 30's in the broadening of the acceptance of Satchmo.

One of the short films featured in the first half of the programme bears mentioning. Made in 1933, it featured the marvellous Ethel Waters and wait for it, a ten year old Sammy Davis Junior! Most people were amazed how little Sammy Davis has changed in 45 years. As someone said, 'it was like watching a boy wearing a Sammy Davis mask.'

Thanks on the aftrenoon are especially due to our 'ticket lady' Audrey Evans and her assistants, to Thelma Wood who supplied another beautiful hand-made Crosby table cloth for raffling, and to Ken Henderson who looked after the projector.

Complaints, suggestions

We are all fairly new still at the business of running a society of this nature. So it is only natural that we occasionally may make mistakes in the running of functions or the planning of future happenings. If you have any complaints or suggestions, please let us know in writing. Are there any other kinds of functions that you would like us to hold? Would you like more functions, and if so, how often? Are the venues that we have chosen suitable, and if not, can you suggest somewhere better? Address your letters to PO Box 422, South Melbourne, 3205. All letters will be answered.

Exciting News

If you are a student of the young Bing, you will be interested to hear that we will shortly be showing his very first ever appearance in a feature movie - the 1930 colour spectacular "King of Jazz" featuring the Paul Whiteman Orchestra. In this film, Bing not only sings behind opening credits, but appears in a specialty number with the Rhythm Boys, andfrom time to time throughout the proceedings. At this stage, we haven't quite decided how we will be presenting the film. At first we thought that we would show it as part of a regular screening in early June, but perhaps we will be a little more ambitious. This is the first time that 'King of Jazz' will have been shown in Australia for many years, and that in itself will have some news value. More details shortly.

Membership Cards

If you have not yet received your official membership card, you should find it enclosed with this newsletter. If yours is missing, it's probably becasue you have not yet (smack smack) returned the membership application form attached to our last newsletter. If by some chance, the above does not apply to you and you still haven't received your card, please let us know as soon as possible and one will be sent to you.

2 hour TV special

Next month (May), one of the American TV networks presents a two-hour TV special on Bing. Although we don't have too many details at present, this will be a major presentation to be aired in prime time. Almost certainly, one of the networks here will pick up the show. Watch your TV guide for details.

Memories of Bing

You may remember a while back I asked anyone interested, to send in on tape their favourite 'memory of Bing'. These voice tapes will be used in a special radio programme on 3CR later in the year. Response has not been bad, but we still require many more tapes to fill out an hour show. If you would like more details on what is required, please drop me a line.

The next 'Crosby Collector' - Sunday May 14, 9.00 pm - 3CR

The next edition of the Crosby Collector goes to air at the above time as part of Neville Wragg's 'Nostalgia Unlimited' on 3CR.

This, the 22nd edition of the programme, features a rundown, month by month, on Bing's activities for the year 1933, and covers records, radio shows and movies. I think that it should be a most interesting programme and I hope that you can be listening.

Two very special new LP's

I have recently received news of two very special new LP's issued by Columbia records in the US. Both are a must for collectors as they feature several sides that have never been on LP before, and also a number of previously unissued takes. Both cover material from the 1928 - 34 period, long sought after by many people.

Bing Crosby Collection, Vol 1. 35093

I'm crazy over you, Rose of Mandalay, Southern Medley, Waiting at the end of the road, I found You, Starlight, Love you funny thing, Shadows on the window, You're still in my heart, Happy go lucky you, Lazy Day, With Summer coming on, Love me tonight, We're a couple of soldiers.

Bing Crosby Collection, Vol 2. 35094

I'll follow you, Try a little tenderness, You're getting to be a habit with me, Young and healthy, You're beautiful tonight my dear, What do I care it's home, You've got me crying again, I've got to pass your house, Shadow Waltz, I've got to sing a torch song, Little dutch mill, Shadows of Love, Riding around in the rain, Give me a heart to sing to.

Isn't that something! If you're a collector, you'll know how difficult some of those tracks are to obtain. In addition, I believe that the American price is just $2.99 per LP! What are you waiting for?

Local issues of interest

Of interest on the local scene is the reissue of the 'Bing and Louis' LP which first made its appearance around 1960. Unfortunately, the LP doesn't include all 11 tracks of the original pressing, BUT it does include one track that was only ever issued on a special LP designed to raise money for the United Nations: "Lazy River". So that makes the record worth having, if only to complete the set.

Bing's 1945 recording of 'Blue of the night' backed with his 1946 recording of 'White Christmas' has turned up again on an MCA 45. If you're interested, the number is 1571. Lots of echo on both tracks unfortunately. When will record companies learn!!!

Two more magazines on Bing

A couple more magazines on Bing have recently appeared on the newstands. These are "A guy called Bing" ($1.65) and "Superstars collectors issue: Bing Crosby" ($2.50). The main appeal of both to my mind, are the pictures - many of which are unusual or uncommon. The text in both cases covers similiar ground.

By the way, we still have plentyof copies of "The Bing Crosby Album" and "Bing - a pictorial tribute" available to members for the special price of $1.25 each. Let me know if you'd like copies.

Other publications

. The Films of Bing Crosby - a hard-cover well-presented review of Bing's film career with hundreds of pictures has been published by Citadel Press in the US. Author is Robert Bookbinder and the book sells in America for US$14.95. I picked up a copy in McGills for the outrageous price of $22.00! They're sold out at the moment but are expecting more copies. Try other bookshops around town. I'm sure that most will have the book eventually.

. The one and only Bing - by Bob Thomas. Published by Grosset and Dunlap and available in hardcover, softcover and paperback. Apparently, photo content varies with each issue. Not available here yet as far as I know.

. The Fabulous life of Bing Crosby - by George Carpozi Jr. A paperback published by Manor Books. I have a copy sent by a friend in the US. Not too good. Written in a hurry to cash in on the passing of Bing. Very superficial.

Bing - text by Joseph L Koenig - a Dell purse book 0486. 49c. No details as yet.

Books worth waiting for are those by Kathryn and one by Ken Barnes which I'm told will be a 'coffee table book' and feature complete details of all Bings films, records etc. Out soon.

More overseas record releases

. A tribute to Duke - Concord Jazz Inc - CJ50. Includes Bing's last American recording (mid-last year) "Don't get around much anymore" Available from Concorde Jazz Inc, Box 845, Concorde, California 94522. Cost $8.98 US. inc. postage.

. Joe Bushkin celebrates 100 years of recorded sound - United Artists UA 30142. Includes Bing last two tracks rec. Oct 4th, 1977: "Now you has Jazz" and "Sail away from Norway".

. The world in 1977 - AP 1977 (Associated Press windup of the year - includes chorus of "I surrender dear" and brief conversation with Bing discussing his favourite record.

. That Travelling Two Beat (Bing & Rosie from 1965) Capitol SM 11736

. Distinctively Bing Vol 1 & 2 - Sunbeam P-502 and P-504. Available from Sunbeam, 13821 Calvert St, Van Nuys, California. 91401. (late 20's and early 30's material - quality not too good).

. No details, but a 3 lp set on Capitol consisting of material taken from Bing's Warner Brothers Sing-a-long LP's of 1959 - 61.

Cassette Library - NEW ADDITIONS

Regular users of the Club cassette library will be delighted to know that we have at last added some new cassettes. If you haven't yet availed yourself of the library service, it's worth giving it a try. Regular users are more than satisfied. When completed, the library will contain every commercial record by Bing in chronological order from 1926 to 1977. At present, we are up to mid-1944. Also available are 8 cassette covering all of Bing's movie soundtracks.

New additions: *KEEP THIS LIST FOR FUTURE REFERENCE

Bing Records 13 - God Bless America (22.3.39) to Cynthia (30.6.39) 41
Bing Records 14 - Gus Edwards Medley (30.6.39) to Only Forever (3.7.
B.R. 15 - Ballad for Americans (6.7.40) to Yes Indeed (13.12.40)
B.R. 16 - San Antonio Rose (16.12.40) - Oh how I miss U (5.7.41) 42
B.R. 17 - Don't break the spell (5.7.41) to Goodbye little Darling(26.1.
B.R. 18 - When the white azaleas (26.1.42)To My Great Grandfather (12.6.42)
B.R. 19 - A Boy in khaki (12.6.42) to Like someone in love (3.5.44)

In addition

Several members have expressed disappointment that Bing's Musical Autobiography Set did not include the original records in the 1926-40 period. So I have prepared two special cassettes in which the originals are cut in, but retaining Bing's narration as a link.

Order: Musical Autobiography set 1 & 2.

Overseas Crosby Societies:

You may be interested in belonging to one or more of the following overseas societies. All produce magazines with a far more comprehensive news content than we can hope to accomplish in this newsletter.

U.S. The American Club Crosby, membership $6.50 p.a. Write: Pat Sullivan, 1301 Sheridan, Apt 96, Chico California 95926 for details.

U.K. The International Crosby Circle, membership 2 pounds. Write: Reg Bristo, 7 Greenmeadow Close, Cwmbran, Gwent, NP4 3NR UK, for details,

UK: Bing Pictorial - incorporating 'tapes exclusive'. Annual membership 2 pounds, 50 p. Write to Frank Murphy, 32 Ferndale Ave, Wallsend, Tyne and Wear NE 28 7NE, England, for details.

Records to members

As mentioned earlier, the Bentleigh Sewing and record centre, 348 Centre Road, Bentleigh, gives members 10% discount on all records purchased.

For Crosby 78's, visit Nevin Walker's Vintage Record Shop, 602 High Street, Armadale. Tues & Thurs 1 - 6pm, Sat 10.00 - 1.00pm

Future Function

Monday, May 1st - Musical Evening 8.00 p.m. Sharp!

This will be the second of our musical evenings for 1978. Three guest speakers will each be speaking on one facet of Bing's career, demonstrating their talks with unusual and interesting musical items. A pleasant relaxed evening to allow members to know each other better. Supper will be served. Venue: the North Balwyn RSL, located in Centreway, off Doncaster Road, just before Trentwood Avenue. Look for the bowling green in front of the RSL.

AND REMEMBER, OUR NEXT FILM SCREENING WILL BE "KING OF JAZZ". WATCH FOR DETAILS.

Welcome to new members

I'd like once again to take the opportunity to welcome all new members who have joined the society in recent times. I hope that you find your membership rewarding and fulfilling. If you enjoy our meetings, why not bring along friends who share your interest in Bing?

Following is a reproduction of a letter sent to us recently by Kathryn Crosby. I'm sure that you will find it interesting.

January 3, 1978

Dear Bob,

I am so sorry to be so late in getting back to you, especially when it is I who consider it an honor to be offered membership Number 1 in The Victorian Bing Crosby Society.

Yes, Bing was coming to Australia. We had planned to make the trip in the spring or early fall. Both of us were so looking forward to that trip with such joy and anticipation.

At this time I personally have no plans to come over there - but perhaps someday. I certainly hope so.

Thank you for your very lovely letter and the membership Number 1. It means a great deal to me. Do keep in touch.

Sincerely,

Kathryn

Kathryn Crosby

Mr. Bob Machliss, President
The Victoria Bing Crosby Society
P.O. Box 422
South Melbourne
Victoria, Australia 3205

The following article appeared recently in the American trade paper "Advertising Age". It is reprinted here as it helps to give an insight into another side of Bing's career that would not be too well known to us in this country.

Minute Maid hails Crosby for helping make it No. 1

HOUSTON—The death of Bing Crosby on Oct. 14 forced Coca-Cola Foods to pull two tv spots scheduled for a current flight and to cancel a planned subsequent flight, in effect, removing the company's Minute Maid orange juice from television for the time. The division of the Coca-Cola Co. and its agency, Marschalk Co., New York, is developing new advertising.

The current advertising, in addition to featuring the Crosby family and, in some instances, Mr. Crosby on camera, also had voice-overs done by Bing.

"There can be no doubt that Bing Crosby helped Minute Maid attain its stature as the No. 1 national brand of orange juice and helped it maintain that leadership," a company spokesman said.

■ Mr. Crosby was the first person to do commercials for Minute Maid, beginning on radio in 1948. He and his family began doing tv commercials in 1968.

At one time Mr. Crosby was a stockholder in the old Minute Maid Co. and during the 1950s, while the brand was expanding, he was a Minute Maid distributor on the West Coast, a position that is believed to have helped significantly in the brand achieving national distribution.

The long association with Minute Maid through advertising and business ties led to a popular myth that he actually was the owner of the company.

While Mr. Crosby's death created problems for Minute Maid, it presented opportunities for others, chiefly in the records and tv syndication fields.

London-based Polydor Records had recently signed Mr. Crosby for a new album. Polydor Inc., U. S. licensee, said the lp will be released here, probably in late November, with print and radio advertising support. The title is reportedly "Seasons."

As for his past records on the Decca label (now MCA Records), some retailers have noticed an increase in sales for Crosby favorites, but nothing approaching the Elvis Presley boom (AA, Aug. 22).

Strongest demand so far is for the "White Christmas" lp, said MCA, which plans a "Bing Crosby's Greatest Hits" package shortly.

Mr. Crosby's 850 singles and lps sold 400,000,000 copies since 1931, ranking him behind Mr. Presley and the Beatles. The song "White Christmas" is generally considered his biggest seller, at 40,000,000 copies through 1976, although the singer himself said in an NBC "Today" interview that he felt his "Silent Night" had sold more copies.

CBS-TV plans to air a Crosby family yule special in November as scheduled; sponsors are Polaroid and Procter & Gamble (AA, Oct. 17). The show was completed in London last month.

At NBC, Mr. Crosby had been slated to appear on "America Salutes the Queen" in November and on Bob Hope's "Road to Hollywood" special on Oct. 28. The Texaco-sponsored Hope show, which will feature clips from his films, will be postponed, since Mr. Hope wants to present a 2-hour Crosby tribute first.

■ Mr. Crosby's broadcast career began in 1931 on CBS Radio. In 1938, when his "Kraft Music Hall" was a top-rated radio show on NBC, he was interviewed by ADVERTISING AGE editor-founder G. D. Crain Jr. Mr. Crosby even then was noted for his casual behavior, and the informality surrounding the show was mentioned. "I have a lot of fun doing a broadcast," the singer said. "Maybe our elimination of dress rehearsals is responsible."

Much of the Crosby material at that time was written by Carroll Carroll of J. Walter Thompson Co., who noted: "Bing is a success on the air because he is Bing... He is never playing a part, he is simply being himself."

Mr. Crosby was appreciative of his sponsors. Adman Bart Stebbins one time recalled an incident in the early '30s, when Mr. Crosby was on tour with "The Signal Carnival," a radio show sponsored by Signal Oil Co. Autograph seekers got a message that said: "With best regards from Bing Crosby—through the courtesy of the Signal Oil Co."

Commented the singer: "We wouldn't be here if it weren't for Signal, and if anybody wants my autograph, that's the way they'll get it." ∓

Finally, we conclude this issue of the newsletter with a copy of an article that appeared recently in the American TV magazine "TV Guide".

BING

A fond remembrance of the unique qualities that made him an American original

By Don Freeman

[The final rounds of this year's Bing Crosby National Pro-Am golf tournament will be telecast on ABC on Jan. 21 and 22.—Ed.]

The name itself had such a leisurely lilt about it, a casual, lighthearted and appealing grace. Bing Crosby.

I remember once asking Crosby if the name Bing had proved to be an asset in his career. "Absolutely," he said. "Made all the difference in the world. The appellation was right for a wandering minstrel of my stripe. People kind of remembered the name. There just aren't many Bings in public life."

Many Bings? There was only one Bing Crosby and he is gone now and there is a perplexing sense of loss and finality. Death was not a word one could ever associate with this symbol of good times who had been a part of our lives for so long. He was always there, a national asset, and for me a hero and model going back to college days. My man was Crosby. Strolling the campus, I wanted to be Bing Crosby. I sought the easy insouciance that was Bing. I learned to smoke a pipe like Bing. I tried to talk like Bing and move like Bing, in his ingratiatingly effortless style. I went about crooning "Pennies from Heaven."

Small matter that I did all of this so badly that people, unaware of my wellspring, merely thought I was talking funny. And I couldn't keep the pipe lit.

Once, I mentioned this to Crosby. He was amused. "Tell you what," Bing said to me a year or two ago, "if you ever get a bit thin on top, I've got an old toupee you can have."

One remembers warmly this man who was embraced by worldwide fame but who seemed, in a curious way, to be one of us. Some months ago, working closely with Bing, I had written a piece for one of the travel magazines →

on his favorite golf holes around the world. Later he phoned me. "Hi, Don," he said, "this is Bing Crosby."

That self-effacing salutation on the phone was typical of Bing. I think "Bing Crosby," he had said, not simply "Bing," which would surely have been sufficient. How many Bings are there? How many voices so easily recognized, so ingrained in the public consciousness, so rich and individual?

I think now of a chilly morning up in the stately San Francisco suburb of Hillsborough, when Bing Crosby greeted me at the door of his home. I had come for an interview. "Come on in," Bing said then. "It's a little fresh out there." Then he glanced up at the darkening clouds. "May get ourselves something of a soak later on."

I had brought him a can of English tobacco and we sat in his den, with the blazing fire in the fireplace and the walls alive with original Russells and Remingtons and Wieghorsts, and we smoked our pipes and Bing talked.

There was much pleasure in listening to Bing, with his special feel for words and how they sound, the well-burnished phrases tumbling out like musical notes. He talked about his early inspiration, the Irish tenor John McCormack—"a hero in our house"—and how he studied law at Gonzaga University. He talked about going out in the 1920s as a singer with the Three Rhythm Boys and working with Paul Whiteman. "We filled 'em all over the country," Bing remembered, "but we told an omelet in New York."

There was always, in Bing's language, the appealing spin of original phrase. As Fred Russell, the sportswriter from Nashville, has suggested, some words are wallflowers and others dance the night away. Bing's words had feet like Fred Astaire.

When the television cameras first came to the Crosby Clambake, Bing's annual golf tournament at Monterey, Cal., Crosby put aside his clubs and took to the microphone as a commentator. Let others remember the scenic glories of Pebble Beach and the celebrity nackers and the crackerjack pros. Bing's descriptions, his playful thrusts of language, cling to my memory.

Bing would talk about a "whisper of a wind" and a golfer using a "quiet six-iron to best a heartless pin placement." In Bing's eyes, the ball didn't roll close to the hole—"it snuggled up to the aperture." He would refer to the 18th at Pebble as "a stern finishing hole, very testing." An indecisive swing he would describe as "a bit girlish," and a powerhouse swing he might sum up as "very athletic." One year, as Jack Lemmon delighted the crowd with the game's most ungainly swing off the tee, Bing merrily observed that he "looks like he's basting a turkey!"

"Loose as ashes" is another phrase that Bing once contributed to the language, referring to someone else. But the words might well have applied to Harry Lillis Crosby. He was, assuredly, an American original. It was once said that to an American living abroad, no other voice would sound so American as Bing Crosby's. It seems appropriate that his favorite historical character, his own personal hero, was one of the architects of the American Revolution, Benjamin Franklin.

"Anything written about Ben I've got it in my library," I remember Bing saying one day. "This goes back to, oh, 1939, when a doctor friend of mine lent me a biography. I ate it up. Been a Franklin buff ever since. People think of Ben as a bit of a roisterer with a bawdy side. But he was a great negotiator. Nobody outsmarted him. He was an all-around fellow, a great tibber known to accept a friendly glass, a great scientist, a great statesman. Ben had a few anders, too. A wanderin' eye, you know."

There was such a tang and style about Bing. Once having seen or heard Bing Crosby, you would never confuse him with anyone else. I make no pretense of having known Bing other than professionally, as a writer in pursuit of interviews. He was a complex blend of the public figure and the private man. There were those who would attempt to march uninvited past that wall of privacy and at once the Crosby blue eyes would turn to ice. It was a side of the man that I never witnessed.

When I saw Bing, he was always rich with good humor, the breezy raconteur spinning tales. At a restaurant in San Francisco a few weeks before the Crosby golf tournament one year, Bing dropped by to hoist a few with the gentlemen of the press.

For Bing, there had been a pleas[ant] morning of duck hunting, and he [ar]rived still dressed for the shoot. [He] put a light to his pipe and a sip [of] his wine, and soon the talk was of the breezes that whip around the Monterey Peninsula, site of his tournament.

"Listen, they have a few breezes in Ireland, too," Bing informed the group at the table. "They're mighty keen on golf over there, all very knowledgeable. One day I'm playing at Killarney and I'm having trouble hitting my drive into a stiff breeze, and this little old Irish lady, bundled to the nines, pipes up from the gallery: 'Bing, slip it under the wind!' "

Then Bing was reminded of another incident during one of his many visits to Ireland. "I was supposed to give a little talk," Bing said, "and I was just starting my remarks. Before I could finish a sentence, this big Irish navvy way back in the hall yells out in a brogue as thick as bog: 'We can't see you, Bing. Would you ever stand on your wallet?' "

The last time I saw Bing Crosby was at Lakeside Golf Club in North Hollywood as we did an interview waiting in a golf cart at the first tee. I wish he were there still, starting out all over again.

And that's just about it for this edition of the Newsletter.
I hope that you like the new features that we've incorporated and if you have any suggestions, I look forward to hearing from you.
Until next time,

Bob Mackie